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Christian Courier

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Single parents' support group meets needs in Edmonton

Jessie Schut

EDMONTON — Single parenthood is a fact of life. Divorce breaks up homes, usually leaving children in the custody of one parent or the other. As well, single mothers are choosing to keep their babies and raise them on their own.

Statistics paint a gloomy picture for these single parents, especially for single mothers, many of whom live below the poverty line.

In the early '80s Helen Wevers felt the burden of such single mothers when she counselled at Birthright, a pro-life crisis pregnancy counselling service. Because she volunteered often, she found herself overwhelmed by the needs of the women. Many of them had no family or financial support to fall back on.

At Wevers' West End Christian Reformed Church, youth pastor Herb De Ruyter had started a small Bible study for some church members who were single mothers. Wevers' steered some of the contacts to the group. The Bible study, she discovered, wasn't the best way to minister to these women, so a group of women from the church decided to establish a support group for them instead.

Unexpected service

It was the beginning of a fledgling ministry that has challenged and involved West End's members and has led them into unexpected areas of service. The need for the group is so great, it has spawned two other groups at Inglewood CRC and Calvary Community Church. Edmonton's public health board routinely refers clients to the groups, and wishes there were more of them throughout the

See **SUPPORT** *page 2...*

JESSIE SCHUT

West End Single Parents support group sponsors a weekend camp for parents and children every summer.

Bob Rae may become national unity advocate

Three Reformed analysts judge Rae's past, future

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — In the wake of Bob Rae's resignation as Ontario NDP leader, some Christians speculate that he may become a champion for national unity in Canada.

Gerald Vandezande, director of public affairs for Citizens for Public Justice, is sad to see Rae leave provincial politics. "Ontario's going to sorely miss him. He's a giant compared to Harris and McLeod," Vandezande says.

C.C. FILES

Bob Rae

Vandezande has known Rae since he was leader of the Opposition. "We related on a first-name basis."

In his role with CPJ, Vandezande dealt with Rae on issues such as abortion and Sunday shopping. "I deeply disagreed with him" on these issues, says Vandezande, but he adds, "I found him an approachable, very thoughtful person.... The guy is extremely insightful." Vandezande speculates that Rae may become a national unity mediator, possibly working with the federal government in a non-partisan role.

Rae is fluently bilingual and has the legal and political background to deal with tough issues like national unity, Vandezande notes. "I hope he doesn't disappear into university or private life," he adds.

Premier at a difficult time

As premier, Rae faced a difficult time because "he became premier when the whole economy was beginning to fall apart," says Vandezande. Rae's social contract was "a very constructive attempt to prevent serious job loss for the most vulnerable."

Another positive achievement was Rae's role in the Charlottetown talks. If the Charlottetown accord had been accepted, "it could have prevented the constitutional crisis we have now," says Vandezande. On the negative side, Rae was "less of a team player and consensus builder than he could have been. He could have been more of a community builder."

Frances Lankin or Richard Johnston may be good future leaders for the Ontario NDP, Vandezande thinks. Lankin is "a very bright, thoughtful person," and Johnston "was the conscience of the [NDP] caucus

See **RAE** *page 2...*

In this Issue

The Postman was one of last year's best films ..... p. 7

A native son returns to Indonesia .... p. 10

Buenos Aires teaches hard lessons ..... p. 12

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News

Support group reinforces parenting skills

...continued from page 1

city.

Wevers feels that single-parent support ministry is an area in which the church has much to offer. "The young children in these single parent families are going to be part of this country's future," she says. "If we can show single parent families God's love and help equip them to face their unique challenges, our society will be enriched and we will be fulfilling God's command."

JESSIE SCHUT

Helen Wevers chats with two single mothers

Practical steps

The initiators had no model to follow when they set up the first single parents' support group. But the principles they established are still followed today, 11 years later.

The first need in the ministry is to remove some of the obstacles that keep parents away from meetings — transportation and child care. The support group arranges for church volunteers to drive parents and their children to and from the twice-monthly meeting, where the children are cared for and entertained by other volunteers while their parents listen to speakers or have discussions.

The meetings focus on such concrete topics as budgeting, parenting, preparing your income tax, co-dependencies and motivation. The meetings reinforce skills parents need to cope with the challenges they experience. Experts in these fields are recruited from community resources such as the board of health, Legal Aid Society and addiction treatment centres.

"We want to meet these women where they're at, and first take care of their immediate needs," says Wevers. "Many of them have never set foot in the church, or have had bad experiences with it, so our first goal is to have them perceive the church as a safe and comforting place."

A sign of caring

Volunteers are also involved in telephoning all of the parents every week to inform them of events and activities, to remind them of future meetings and ask about their lives and their needs. West End CRC has about 40 persons on their phone list to receive these calls. For some of the parents, the weekly phone calls are a life-line, a sign that someone cares about them.

The caring prepares the heart of some to listen to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. That's what happened to Lucille Potie. Eleven years ago, single, pregnant and without any support in the city, she saw a small ad for Birthright while she was riding the bus. Her counsellor referred her to West End's fledgling support group.

"I was a very needy person," she says. "I was a loner, introverted, and hid myself from people. But at the group, I got emotional and practical support from persons who really cared for me. Occasionally, they would talk about spiritual mattes and that would make me angry. But it was their lifestyle, their peace and security that really drew me to the Lord. I wanted the peace that they had."

Lucille started attending a local church and soon came to faith. Since then, she has become involved in a new single-parent support group in her area, this time as a helper and leader, giving back some of what she received.

Additional needs

Group members also bring other needs with them, which can be a real challenge to the church. West End volunteers have gotten involved in programs to combat illiteracy, poor parenting skills, and sexual abuse. The seniors of the church organize clothing give-aways on meeting nights, and someone facilitates a collective kitchen where parents share the expenses and time of cooking take-home meals together.

While Birthright and similar organizations can offer support and counselling for pregnancy situations, there's a tremendous need for follow-up care for single parents, including those who are single through divorce or bereavement. And while most of the parents in the three Edmonton support groups are women, single fathers also have unique and deep needs that often aren't being addressed by the church, say Birthright counsellors. There are many opportunities for a church to reach out to this segment of the population.

At West End and Inglewood CRC, the church, for many of the single parents, has become a safe refuge, where people whom they trust will go the second mile for them. For some, the support group has become a stepping stone to the other programs of the church, such as Coffee Break, Bible Studies for themselves and Calvinettes and Cadets for their children. For all, it has raised their awareness of the fact that there is a God who cares for them and wants to live in their hearts and lives.

"I know that the people who come to the group need the Lord," says Potie. "But sometimes they're so angry at God for what has happened in their lives, that they're not ready to listen. But if they can trust the leaders, if they feel accepted by the church, their hearts will be softened toward God in the process. I know, because it happened to me. Single Parents Support Group has turned my life around."

JESSIE SCHUT

A child enjoys a camp connected with the support group.

Rae elicits differences of opinion

...continued from page 1

when it was in Opposition." The next NDP leader should be sensitive to the needs of everyone and should work toward community solidarity, says Vandezande.

A lot of missteps

David Koyzis, professor of political science at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., is critical of Rae's time in power. "There were quite a lot of missteps in the first few months," he says.

Rae "ended up alienating quite a few people" including labor unions. Another criticism Koyzis makes is "with his first budget, he didn't come up with a way to pay for his programs." Social democratic parties should offer compassion, but "I'm not sure his government delivered on that."

Koyzis expects Rae to return to private law practice, but he suggests Rae may well return to politics in the future. Rae would be well-placed to do national unity promotion work, Koyzis agrees.

Koyzis doesn't see any obvious successor to Rae as the next Ontario NDP leader. The party has a lot of rebuilding to do, both in Ontario and nationally. Koyzis doesn't expect the NDP to return to power soon in Ontario "unless something dramatic happens." The NDP's coming to power in 1990 was "kind of a fluke" caused by our electoral system, he says.

Harry Antonides, of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, also criticizes Rae's role in Ontario politics. "I don't think there's much positive to say about it," he comments. Rae has had a falling out with his party and the labor movement, and "I think he's pretty bitter about that," says Antonides.

One of Rae's most negative "achievements" while in power was to drive up the provincial deficit to $10 billion from $3 billion, says Antonides. The NDP's overspending was "disastrous," he asserts. "I think it is becoming more and more clear that that kind of socialism is not practical." Antonides also criticizes the NDP's reorganization of the health care system.

Finding a balance

On the positive side, Antonides says that Rae as a person is "a nice guy" and, for the most part, "a sensible socialist." But Antonides does not personally support socialism.

Antonides agrees that Rae would do well in international relations or national unity work. "I think you will hear more about him in that direction," he says.

Frances Lankin may become the next NDP leader, Antonides speculates. But the Ontario NDP is "a very divided party." It is hard to predict when the NDP will return to power in Ontario, says Antonides. He describes recent politics in Ontario as "an ongoing teeter-totter between left and right."

Antonides says the present Harris government is "dealing with the real problems," but some of its measures have been "pretty Draconian." In Ontario, "a greater distinction has to be made between the needy and those who should not be coddled," Antonides concludes.

News

Newfoundland referendum repercussions worry Ontario educators

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The federal government has announced that it will consider making a constitutional change which could take away church control of Newfoundland's school system. Some educators are concerned that the rights of private and separate schools in Ontario could also be affected if a change is made.

Last September, 54 per cent of voters in a Newfoundland referendum gave the provincial government the go-ahead to ask Ottawa for the constitutional change. Recently, federal Justice Minister Allan Rock announced that a resolution to recognize the Newfoundland vote will be put before the House of Commons when it resumes in February.

Although the federal government has been quick to accept the results of the Newfoundland referendum, Prime Minister Chretien has offered no constitutional changes for Quebec, despite the close vote in its recent referendum. Rock defends that, saying the changes sought in Newfoundland would have local impact, but potential changes in Quebec would affect the whole country.

But some argue that a constitutional change for Newfoundland would also affect Christian schools in the rest of Canada. Adrian Guldemond, executive director of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, says that if the constitutional change is made, "the church school movement [in Newfoundland] will be history."

The rights of Catholic schools in Ontario could also be in danger if this happens, suggests Guldemond, because the constitution would allow the schools less protection.

Guldemond expects the government will introduce the constitutional change quietly. "I think they would rather have no one notice it." He notes that the Quebec government is also trying to secularize the school system there.

Less protection

Vince Monaghan, director of education for the Lincoln County Catholic School Board in Ontario's Niagara peninsula, says that Catholics, too, are concerned about possible changes. The school board has sent a letter to Chretien expressing opposition to any constitutional change.

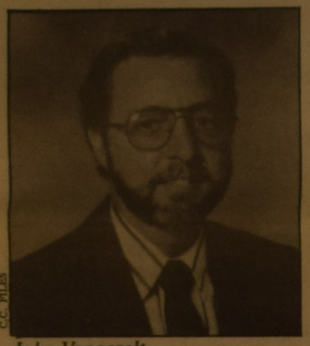
The board's main concern is that a majority can take away minority rights, says Monaghan. If the federal government proceeds with the proposed changes related to Newfoundland, "it bodes well for those who want to change the system in Ontario," he says.

Ontario's public schools "have been pushing for the same thing" as the Newfoundland government, says Monaghan. But unless the Catholic school system's rights are protected, it will erode, he says.

The main reason given for changes to school systems is to save money, suggests Monaghan.

But asked if there is a parallel between possible changes to the constitution for Newfoundland and for Quebec, Monaghan described it as "an apples and oranges issue."

Ontario Christian schools challenge Supreme Court for their rights



C.C. PILES

John Vanasselt

Alan Doerksen

ANCASTER, Ont. — The Supreme Court of Canada will hear a case this month which seeks more recognition for independent Christian schools.

The case is connected with two previous cases dating back more than four years. All the cases relate to Walter Elgersma, a 16-year-old student suffering from spinal bifida who is unable to receive government-funded healthcare as long as he attends a privately funded Christian school.

Elgersma attends Hamilton District Christian High School. His parents, along with three other Christian couples and five Jewish parents, took the case to the Ontario civil court in 1990, assisted by the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. The case was rejected by that court in 1992. In 1994, the Ontario Court of Appeal also rejected it.

The latest court case came before the Supreme Court on Jan. 23 and 24. The Jewish Congress and the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools are the appellants.

"Nothing has changed in Ontario yet" regarding the healthcare system's connection to the public school system, says OACS director of communications Vanasselt. The main issue of the court case is "discrimination on the basis of religious belief."

The Ontario government provides no funding for independent schools, and also denies them health and transportation services. "These services should be delivered to people no matter where they go to school," states Vanasselt.

The Supreme Court will issue a decision within three or four months. OACS members hope "the court will identify discrimination taking place," Vanasselt says. Then there will be greater recognition for Christian schools. If they are officially recognized, they may get access to public funding and have equal standing to Ontario's public and Catholic schools in the future, he adds. OACS also hopes this case will result in having "freedom to educate" being declared a constitutional right for parents, and in the right to educate being removed from parliamentary discretion.

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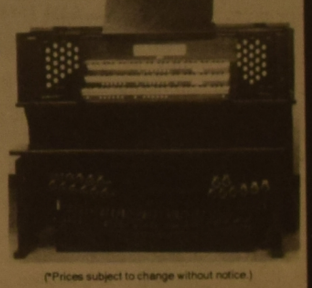

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Editorials

Capital punishment need not be based on revenge

A prisoner from Connecticut who's on death row sent us an article about capital punishment last week. It's not hard to guess what his position is on the matter. His main argument against capital punishment was that execution of a murderer degrades a society. He quoted former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, who once spoke the following words against the use of the death penalty: "My primary concern here is not compassion for the murderer. My concern is for the society which adopts vengeance as an acceptable motive for its collective behavior."

A molar for a molar

As we read the prisoner's article we realized that for him the issue is hardly academic. And we must add that we always feel a little uncomfortable discussing something that negatively affects someone else. But just as the man waiting for the death penalty cannot claim a greater right for taking a stand on capital punishment, we need not refrain from taking a stand just because our necks are fairly secure for the time being.

Although we are not strong proponents of the death penalty, mainly because we are afraid that the state can make mistakes in judging someone guilty who is not (think of Donald Marshall, David Milgaard and Guy Paul Morin), we do not accept the reasoning of those who denounce capital punishment as a sentence based on vengeance. Nor do we think that a state debases itself when it applies the legal rule of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

We would debase ourselves if we applied that rule as part of our personal ethics, which ought to follow Jesus' rule: forgive someone 77 times. But isn't Lady Justice supposed to be blind also to personal ethics as she attempts to strike a balance between the crime and the punishment?

A brother's enemy

Recently, a young drug dealer named Clinton Gayle was found guilty of having murdered Toronto police officer Todd Baylis. The brother of the slain officer was asked for his reactions to the verdict. He spoke eloquently of his love for his brother and the terrible pain that had been afflicted on his family. He said he was happy with the verdict for Clinton Gayle, which resulted in the heaviest sentence possible under Canada's Criminal Code: 25 years without parole.

And then he added something at the end that revealed that his views were partly motivated by revenge: "I hope he [Gayle] enjoys his new home." We can so well understand why he made that almost "innocent" comment; and we're not quoting it to berate the speaker, but it made us reflect on the purpose of punishment.

In fact, one of us dreamt about the interview that night. In that dream Todd Baylis's brother said, "I don't hate Clinton Gayle, but I wish there were a death penalty awaiting him because he took someone's life and therefore his life should be taken. And then perhaps my brother Todd and Clinton Gayle could embrace in heaven and be reconciled."

What a pipe dream! Yet this felt like a possible Christian response. What the dreamer was trying to say was that capital punishment need not be based on the revenge motif.

Mercy is a follower

Some Christian friends may say, "But what about mercy? Is God really interested in "a tooth for a tooth"? Where would we be if he applied that rule on Judgment Day?"

Dear friends, we would be goners. God is a God of mercy, you're right. But mercy does not deny the right to exact payment of a similar kind, and it never leads, but always follows, justice. Jesus accepted the full sentence of God's justified anger against sin by dying, and it's only because of his death that *we* do not have to die. Now if the state can develop a similar system of substitution, we might be convinced that the death penalty is no longer warranted.

Or if the state said, you deserve to die, but the family of the victim has pleaded for your life so we will not put you to death, we would feel that justice had been done. Or even if the judge pronounced the death sentence and the government extended a pardon, justice would still have been acknowledged in the sentence. We're all for mercy seasoning justice, but we're opposed to it poisoning justice.

God's servant

When the right of the state to ask for the death penalty is being denied by those who jabber about the values of an enlightened society being degraded by such a barbaric sentence, then it's difficult to uphold the rules for a just nation. It's certainly hard to live according to the teachings of Romans 13, which says that the government "is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

One reason so many in our society oppose the death sentence is because they see this life as the ultimate stage. In addition, they think that the sword of the government has been given by the people, not by God. When God is taken out of the picture, there is no justice mandate and no love empowerment that can lift us above the human scene of personal motives, whether they be motives of revenge or kindness.

The irony is that both revenge and kindness can kill. **BW**

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Mercy looks good on us

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd," said Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, as she confronted Shylock, who craved "the law [and] the penalty." After all, the court case he had initiated was going his way. What Portia meant was that mercy cannot be forced through a strainer because it is by its very nature an act of grace, like "the gentle rain from heaven." Yet mercy "becomes the throned monarch better than his crown," she argued. "And earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice." In other words, Portia makes a compelling image-of-God argument for the use of mercy as a seasoning agent in a court of law. We'll buy that! **BW**

Letters

Men, like God, prefer the outdoors over church

I am glad to read the editor's exchange with Adrian Peetoom on men in the church. I think that there are multiple reasons for men abandoning the church and/or faith.

Take a close look at the images on television, film and at portrayals in literature of religious men. There is the thin, mousy, Anglican, teetotalling person at a ladies social. Then there is the womanizing evangelical preacher slaying women in the Spirit, and the bigoted preacher leading a crowd of morally outraged citizens. In these cases church-attending men are portrayed as weak or hypocritical or vengeful.

Then there are the well-meaning men who have nothing against religion, who believe that the church provides a good moral education for their children. Since the nurturing of children falls to women, the mothers can take the kids to church. The men will go fishing and enjoy God in his creation — God is a male, a kind of benevolent Grandpa Walton, who, like all real men, is outdoors in his creation while the preacher, the lesser man, is in the church building with the women and children. (Nowadays we are reluctant to leave the women and children alone with that preacher man.)

Another consideration is the pessimism associated with the Christian faith (for Protestants and Roman Catholics alike), the focus on sin, guilt and perfection. The church stands over the parishioner like a critical parent, rebuking and correcting. The emphasis is on authority and obedience. This may conflict with an ideology that celebrates the male as strong, active, courageous, single-minded and in charge.

The church as the critical parent also serves the function of moral conscience for the nation. Both these functions are tainted by abuse and scandal. Yet it wants to hold on to these roles and continues in them; but now the church's critical and moral voice can be construed as self-righteousness or self-defense.

'Fight or flight' reflex

In response to this situation a "fight or flight" reflex may kick in. Men who have had a difficult time at home with the "critical parent" traditionally have left the home, gone to sea, joined the army, found work, moved away. Now that the church is in turmoil and some have decided to fight, others may choose flight to avoid being hurt.

When adding a Christian pessimism and defensiveness to an already stressful situation in which family strife, economic change, political uncertainty, accidents, sickness or crime plague almost everyone, some men may believe they have enough to deal with during the week and do not want the added stress of more bad news on Sunday. They, therefore, stay away from church. This is probably a minor consideration.

Are men intellectual, but theology has lost its intellectual respectability? Are men strong and muscular, but the church is weak and passive? I guess there are movements afoot to make the Christian faith intellectually respectable and to make the faith more muscular in order to attract men. It is my opinion that the church could be less of a critical parent and more of a nurturing one. That may help.

Jan de Bree
Duncan, B.C.

Let's cut Queen Elizabeth's apron strings

Nick Loenen is quite correct in stating that our history is "a repudiation of nationalism based on pocketbook considerations" ("A modest proposal for Canadian equality," CC Jan. 12, '96). Money and economics are certainly not a noble cause to fight and die for!

The never-ending, frustrating and bruising unity debate in Canada lacks the distinction of a noble cause. The French might say our political system lacks passion or a "cause celebre." The Dutch and Americans had their wars of independence, along with their national heroes and martyrs.

But what does Canada have to show for itself? A dusty, academic BNA Act of 1867. What Canadian student can recite the first paragraph of this venerable document of political compromise between English- and French-speaking Canada?

No civil war, please

Canadians have historically abhorred confrontation at the national level. Our reputation in the world has been that of peacemaker. Canadian soldiers have distinguished themselves in several wars; but, to our credit, it is fair to say that Canadians would rather talk than fight. It is inconceivable for present-day Canadians to even entertain the notion of a civil war to force Quebec to remain in Canada. We consider ourselves too civilized.

It was no accident that Canada had its birth as a nation in 1867, shortly after the mighty industrial giant to the south had forever settled the notion of secession by the southern states. The American Civil War was, even by today's standards, the bitterest and bloodiest domestic conflict, with an estimated loss of 650,000 lives. President Lincoln was able to evoke an aura of nobility and justice by making the abolition of slavery the central issue. He lost his life in this cause when an assassin's bullet killed him in 1865.

Sir John A. Macdonald and Etienne Cartier got along very well because they both feared an American invasion, a possible repeat of the War of 1812. Canada's founding fathers' solution to the American threat of invasion was a political union of convenience called Canada.

Since we never had a "noble cause", we must fashion one. Enter Peter Newman, noted Canadian writer and journalist. He advanced a refreshing idea in a recent *Maclean's* article (Dec. 11) entitled "The time has come to declare a republic."

A clean slate

According to Newman, "Canada will survive only if we make large changes quickly — which is why we ought to ditch the British monarchy.... It would help convince Quebec that the rest of Canada is not married to the status quo but is open to revolutionary new ideas and fresh ways of governing."

I agree with Newman that Canadians should follow Australia, another Commonwealth nation, by seriously entertaining the idea of breaking the British monarchy connection.

The idea of cutting the apron strings of the much discredited British monarchy, while not a noble cause (no pun intended), is certainly worth trying. Let's as soon as possible start a national debate on the abolition of the British monarchy as a means of uniting Canada.

Henry Lammers
St. Catharines, Ont.

The 'miracle' of wine into water

Kati van Bergen

(Editor's note: We read a neat Jewish story in the January 12 issue of Centraal Weekblad *and decided to translate it for our readers.)*

Two people are getting married. But they're dirt poor. They can't afford to throw a wedding feast. What are they going to serve those guests if they do? They don't even have enough money for their own groceries. They look at each other with worried faces.

All of a sudden the man's face lights up. "What's going on?" his fiancee wants to know.

"I have an idea," he says. "I'm going to ask all the wedding guests to bring a bottle of red wine. Then I'll place a large barrel near the entrance of the hall. The guests can pour their bottles of wine into that. You'll see that we will have the best wine of the year!"

Wow, the man's fiancee thinks the idea is fantastic. She, too, can smile again.

The wedding day comes quickly. Each guest pours his or her bottle of wine into the large vat. When everyone is inside, the feast can begin. The master of ceremonies calls on the groom to ladle some wine from the barrel into the first glass. But something is wrong. The wine turns out to be water.

"What has happened?" the groom calls out. It is soon clear. Each guest thought that one bottle of water in a large barrel of wine would not be noticed. You don't taste the difference! But, if almost all the wedding guests bring water, then the feast cannot go on.

No one dares to say anything. With red faces all the wedding guests leave the hall. The wedding feast has fallen into the water.

(Editor: I wonder how we can apply this story to our own communal affairs?)

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Family

All love comes from God

Didy Prinzen

He walked into the waiting room, a slenderly built man of Asian extraction, with two children in tow. There was a spring in his step and he radiated happiness. I overheard him say to the receptionist, "I just picked them up for the weekend!"

I watched the children run to the toy centre and carry selected toys to where their father had sat down. He scrutinized them as they played on the floor near him. What struck me was the intensity with which he watched them. His eyes never left the children and his face emitted contentment. It was quite evident he was making up for lost time.

Uninhibited expression

Every once in a while the little girl, who was perhaps three years old, got up from the floor, jumped onto her father's knee and kissed him smack on the mouth. The boy, who couldn't have been more than five, followed suit.

It was a lovely scene from which I couldn't take my eyes. At the same time I marvelled at such happiness despite the sadness of an apparently broken marriage.

The next day while sitting under the dryer at the hairdresser's I watched a woman enter the shop in a wheelchair. I noticed that her left arm shook severely. Accompanying her was a woman who seemed to be her daughter; there was a strong resemblance.

When sitting directly opposite from them I observed how the hairdresser, with the daughter's help, tried to position the woman in a way which was most comfortable to her. As the woman's hair was shampooed the daughter held down her mother's arm to keep it from shaking, and she continually regarded her mother's face with love and concern. She seemed unaware of others in the shop.

I realized that I was again watching something beautiful — love and devotion — this time in the midst of what seemed to me a sad physical infirmity.

I don't know if the people I observed loved the Lord. I hope so. The love they showed certainly came from God, however, because all love comes from God (1 John 4:7).

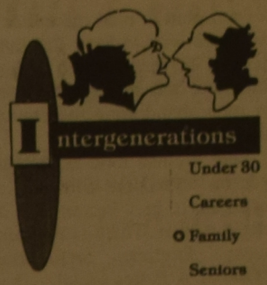
Awesome comfort

I reflected on how awesome and comforting it is that God, regardless of our disobedience and fall, continued and still continues to love the world. And, having created us in his own image, and through his uncommon "common grace," he preserved in all of humankind the ability to love.

But there is infinitely more comfort for those who, in addition to experiencing imperfect human love, know the perfect love of God in Jesus Christ. Then the suffering of this world, whether personal or global, will not overcome us.

Didy Prinzen is an occasional contributor to Christian Courier and lives in Orono, Ont.

Seeing through the glass darkly



"For now we see through the glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor.13:12).

Will we know each other in heaven? Among those many people of all nations, lands and times, will we be able to find the dear friends and relatives from our sojourn here on earth? Will we miss those who aren't there? Will we get to speak with Moses and Mary? These are questions we might ask as we contemplate eternal life.

We really don't get clear answers. Then again, do we spend enough time studying Scripture and praying, and listening for the Lord's answers to our questions?

1 Cor. 13:12 says "we see through a glass darkly/.../and we know in part." Could it be that if we spent more time and effort looking through the glass we'd see and know more and more until that day when the Lord returns and we meet him face to face?

Recently I broke the frames of my glasses. I took the glasses to my local optician. He immediately outfitted me with new frames. Then I asked him about the protective, glare-free coating on my lenses. This coating happened to be cracked and peeling. He examined the lenses and informed me the coating would be removed and my lenses would be good as new.

"OK," I agreed.

"I'll have to send them away. You'll be without them for about four days," he matter-of-factly informed me. He didn't seem to realize how severely that would cramp my lifestyle. I am very near-sighted. Life is a blur without my glasses. But, for better or for worse, I let the optician send my lenses away, a rush notice attached.

Through dark and ugly glasses

At home I searched around for an old pair of glasses to serve me in the interim. I found a broken set of frames from the '70s. The lenses had been darkly tinted to function as sunglasses. I taped the broken frames back together and put them on. To my surprise I could actually see better with them than without them.

To be seen in these dark glasses with the duct tape across my nose was another story. My family and friends laughed when they looked at me. In public I had an urge to explain myself to everyone.

For four days I walked around in a dreary world wishing not to be seen. No one else was even thinking of wearing sunglasses. The weather certainly wasn't co-operating: it was either threatening to rain, or raining; or it was evening. Believe me, November evenings are very dark if you wear sunglasses.

In the meantime, my lenses with the cracked coating were being cleaned. My salvation was being worked out.

That's where the parallel with the Christian life comes in. If we want to see the Lord face to face, we have to get sanctified and made holy. The only way to do that is with the Holy Spirit's help. And he will help us if we spend time looking through the glass darkly at God's Word and praying to him.

Why not start by giving your heavenly father an hour of your time in daily personal devotions?

Marian den Boer, who lives with her husband and five children in Hamilton, Ont., appreciates her new frames with the cleaned-up glasses.

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Hamilton-CHAM	7:30am	820
Kapuskasing-CKAP	9:00am	580
Kingston-WLKC	7:30 a.m	100.7
Newmarket-CKDX	9:00 am	1480
Oshawa-CKAR	8:00am	1350
Owen Sound-CFOS	10:30am	560
Pembroke-CHVR	10:00am	1350
St.Catharines-CKTB	7:30pm	610
Sarnia-CHOK	7:30am	1070
Stratford-CJCS	8:45am	1240
Windsor-CKLW	8:30am	580
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Film Review

Don't miss *The Postman* if he comes to your town

Media/Arts

Marian Van Til

The Postman (Il Postino)

Rated PG
Stars Philippe Noiret, Massimo Troisi, Maria Grazia Cucinotta. Adapted from "Burning Patience" by Antonio Skarmeta. Directed by Michael Radford.

It is just after World War II. But on this beautiful, mountainous island just off Italy's coast it could be decades earlier (apart from the electric lights, a gramophone and a kind of early voice recorder used by one of the residents). There's a look and feel of ancient solidity here, of traditions and vocations passed down the generations.

These passionate folk fish for a living, or they run the only cafe, or the post office. Most are illiterate, though, so the post office doesn't get much business. The islanders grumblingly wait for the erratic water truck to make its supposedly monthly appearance, and hope that maybe voting for a new politician will solve the problem. They talk together, here and there, but their familiarity doesn't seem to breed contempt.

Postman meets poet

Then a temporary resident arrives: the famous Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who has been exiled from his own country for being a communist. The elusive Signor Neruda gets *a lot* of mail, so much that someone will have to bike up the mountain daily to deliver it. Neruda's letters come from women, mostly, who appreciate his love poetry. Perhaps they wistfully see themselves in the poems for Matilde, Neruda's wife, and wish some man in their lives would understand them as Neruda understands women.

The signors Ruoppolo, father and son, live in a bare, plaster cottage. Ruoppolo Sr. is a fisherman; Ruoppolo Jr., who looks like he's well past the age of idealistic youth, doesn't have a vocation, apparently to his father's chagrin.

Unlike his simple, silent father, however, he can read (but "not very fast," he admits). Unfortunately, his literacy has not found him a job; that is, not until he sees a notice advertising the need for a "postman, with bicycle."

Ruoppolo is fascinated by the poet whose mail he delivers, a fascination which leads him to try to explore Neruda's poetry. And over time, Ruoppolo does well. Through both poet and poetry, the peasant postman learns of life beyond his own experience. Three loves develop: first, the postman learns to love language — its sound, its meanings, how it can concisely convey the most complex emotions; second, an improbable love of deep friendship grows between the poet and the postman; and last, with the help of the poet and a new-found language, Ruoppolo's infatuation with a beautiful woman in the village is returned and deepens. The bittersweet ending, though unexpected, accurately reflects true life and opportunities missed, and adds to the film's poignancy.

Infused with poetry

Appropriately, there's a poetic quality about this film. There is no gratuitous dialogue; there are no expendable scenes. The film adeptly succeeds where much cinema fails: it allows itself to speak primarily through pictures, granting them the status of "a thousand words."

The setting is absolutely authentic. It is so thoroughly Italian that only shortly into the film one is mentally savoring the sun-drenched sea air, the dusty mountain road, and the smells and tastes of warm olive oil, crushed garlic, fresh basil and tomatoes on the vine.

The Italian-language dialogue adds to the flavor. (In keeping with his reticent character, Ruoppolo initially speaks in a kind of mumble, which doesn't matter for our understanding because there are English subtitles.) The acting is uniformly good.

Il Postino is being talked about as an Oscar nominee, not for best foreign-language film, but for best film, period. (That has happened only a couple of times in Oscar history.) While that would not be the greatest of all film honors, it reflects not only this film's quality but its unusual accessibility despite its poetic nature and depiction of a "foreign" culture.

Book Review

Touching immigrant story leaves a gap

Separation and Inheritance

By Jan and Aagje De Groot.
Edited by Michael Vander Weele. Windsor, Ont.: Electra Press, 1995. ISBN 0-919417-40-X. 88 pp. $14.95. Reviewed by Bert Witvoet

Another Dutch Reformed immigrant story has been recorded for posterity. This time it's the story of Jan and Aagje De Groot of Sarnia, Ont. *Separation and Inheritance* traces the lives of Jan and Aagje in the post-war Netherlands and then in Canada. The book is edited by their son-in-law Michael Vander Weele, but it would be more accurate to say that it was co-written and edited by him.

And a good job the threesome have done. The language is clear and descriptive, and the arrangement of events creates suspense and variety.

Aagje recalls early life in Sarnia and living through a cold winter in a cold house and marvels that no one got sick. In an understated way she shows how adaptable immigrants could be: "Nelly always needed a feeding early in the morning, and a clean diaper. That's what I did first. But once, when I picked up the diaper after feeding, ja, what shall I say, it was a bit frozen."

Life in Canada

The story advances, flashes back and resumes in a pleasing way. We hear about Jan working for a farmer when the family came to Canada in 1952. It was not always easy. One time Jan got up early and cleaned out the workshop which had six inches of chicken manure on the floor. He cleaned out the benches, sorted out screws and bolts. His employers saw it as an insult, and whenever they could not find a part, they blamed the "stupid Dutchman."

Jan later worked for Dow Chemical for several years, and his income allowed him and Aagje to start saving for a property on which they could grow gladiolas and nursery stock. Subsequently, the De Groots built a successful nursery business in Sarnia.

There were two things that disappointed this reviewer. The story ends abruptly and leaves the reader dissatisfied. A letter to me from Jan De Groot explains why. The Netherlandic Press, which printed the booklet, "could not print more than 11 chapters, there are four chapters left [out], about 30 pages." That is such a pity and such a mistake.

Why did the publisher not look for a printer who could handle 15 chapters? Printing your life story is a once-in-a-lifetime event. You've got to do it right. The fact that the publisher received "generous financial support of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council" makes this even less excusable.

Spiritual journey muted

Second, there is little that is explicit about the De Groots' spiritual journey. That, too, is regrettable. These are God-fearing people with strong Reformed convictions. They are known for their strong support of church, school and Christian organizations. Little of that emerges in the story, unless the remaining four chapters were supposed to add that dimension in an uncharacteristically non-Reformed way — like adding grace to nature.

Given these two rather serious shortcomings, I would heartily recommend a re-issue of this short book, so that the inheritance may be made the richer. It's a story worth reading and knowing.

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Church

New Zealand Reformed church suspends ties with CRC

CC Staff, *with files from URNS*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — A tiny 3,200-member Reformed denomination in New Zealand, which patterned itself after the Christian Reformed Church in North America in its early days in the 1950s, has suspended ecclesiastical ties with its mentor denomination.

When the New Zealand Reformed Churches (NZRC) was founded by Dutch immigrants in 1953 the denomination had been part of the local Presbyterian Church but soon "seceded due to liberalism." The NZRC then relied heavily on Christian Reformed and Orthodox Presbyterian pastors. It even used the *Psalter Hymnal* in worship, a liturgy which closely paralleled that found in most CRCs, and an only slightly modified Church Order.

Late last fall, due to the CRC's perceived "liberalism," as evidenced above all by Synod 1995's decision to allow women to be ordained, the NZRC synod (made up of delegates from three presbyteries [classes] representing the denomination's 17 congregations) voted to "suspend formal relations" with the CRC.

"Suspension means we won't interact like sister churches, yet we're giving strong warning that our relationship will have to be terminated if there is no change," said Rev. Bruce Hoyt, stated clerk of the denomination.

While not happy with the decision, CRC general secretary Dr. David Engelhard sees the move as allowing dialogue and as being "a bit more courteous than what some other churches (notably, the Christelijk Gereformeerden in the Netherlands) have done."

Changes ahead for Dutch theological schools

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — Because of a sharp decline in the number of students and the union process with other churches, the Theological University of Kampen and the theology faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam have begun closer practical co-operation. The two schools both serve the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN). Kampen is oriented toward ministerial training for the church, while the Free University leans toward academic theological training.

The GKN synod has affirmed that it wants both kinds of training. For several years it has been attempting to work out closer co-operation between the schools. In view of the initiative of the institutions the synod can now stop its own efforts.

As the GKN considers union with the Hervormde Kerk and the Evangelical Lutherans, the schools are also considering how they will work with the four training centres of those churches.

Both Kampen and the Free University see possibilities for closer co-operation with the Reformed theology faculties at the universities of Groningen and Utrecht.

Stackhouse to speak to Canada's 'renewal' Presbyterians

Calvin Brown

SCARBOROUGH, Ont. — John Stackhouse, Jr., currently one of Canada's best-known evangelical/Reformed theologians, will be talking to Canada's "renewal" Presbyterians, March 8 and 9 in Toronto about "new realities" and how to respond to them.

Stackhouse, who is currently associate professor of modern Christianity at the University of Manitoba, is a much sought after speaker, writer and commentator on spirituality in Canada.

He will share with the Renewal Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church in Canada his reflections on the current religious situation in the country. Stackhouse will also outline the differences between the ways the church and the world think, and then discuss the church's role in ministering to the world.

Stackhouse has a long-time conviction that the Presbyterian Church has an important and peculiar gift to offer the whole church in Canada and the world — if it will only be true to its Reformed roots and the best of its tradition.

Stackhouse has published some 200 articles and reviews, including writing for such prominent publications as *Christianity Today, Church History, The Christian Century* and *Studies in Religion/Sciences religeuses.*

In 1993 he received his university's most prestigious award for scholarship, and the next year won the Christian Writing Awards for his University of Toronto published book called *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century : An Introduction to its Character.*

The 1996 "Renewal Day" and Stackhouse's speeches will be open to the public. For more information or to register, fax or telephone either of these numbers: (416) 233-6581 or (519) 651-2232.

Church of Norway rules out gay partners as church employees

OSLO, Norway (REC) — The Church of Norway's General Synod has ruled that people in same-sex partnerships cannot serve as employees of the church. The synod also saw no reason for the church to bless homosexual couples.

A committee report issued in February had recommended the opposite. That report was supported by three of the church's 11 bishops. However, the church's national council recommended to the synod that it veto church employment of persons living in a homosexual relationship. The synod decision was a reaffirmation of its previous policy.

The synod was concerned about the implications of the decision on church unity. It also asked the bishops to evaluate the pastoral consequences of the decision. And the synod requested that the decision be reconsidered in 1997.

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Stan de Jong
Manager

Church

Abraham

Wayne Brouwer CHAPTER & VERSE

"You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?" (James 2:20-21).

You remember the story... Abraham is a great old man, probably 125 or so! God had come to him in the past in strange and wonderful ways. When he wore a younger man's clothes, the VOICE had called him on a journey with no fixed destination. But the beckoning was always one of blessing: *I'll give you land beyond measure! I'll make sure you have a child, old as you are! Your descendants will populate these hills and valleys like rain!*

Well, the land kind of took him in. And after some fits and starts he and Sarai did get a child. And even though his pension plan wasn't clear, life in these later years was peaceful and prosperous. After all, there was Isaac. His boy's name meant "Laughter!" and that's what he brought Abraham these days. What a wonder of life!

A darker chapter

And now the VOICE comes again. But is it really the same voice? *Sacrifice your son Isaac on the altar to me!* What kind of God is this? Or is it a demon's mocking mimic? *Kill your boy! Choke out the Laughter!*

There's no sleep this night. The mind whirls while the old bones crawl in pain. Get the servants. Get the transportation. Get provisions. Get wood, Get the son....

Three days travel, and every step harder than the last. Isaac chatters his usual banter, laughter echoing in Abraham's cold heart. There's the high place, finally; the mountains. The plateau of death.

Strangely gruff, Abraham orders the servants to stay. "The boy and I will do it alone from here!" Two on a murderous mission. Only one will return. And add insult to injury when Isaac's laughter turns to the cold question: "Where's the lamb, father?"

What do you say? Do you tell him the truth: "Son, the God who said he loved me enough to give you to your mother and I now says he wants you back, and I've got to do the dirty work!"? How do you lie with a straight face when heaven is ripped apart by hell? Is it a spiteful retort, spat out in unholy jest: "My son, God will provide..."?

So here they are, clearing and building and preparing. And now the end creeps with horror into Isaac's eyes. His father binds him. His father thrusts him on the wood. His father stands over him with a glinting knife. And the Laughter dies.

But not yet. In a miraculous moment time stops and grace points to another sacrifice. The son is free, and faith is affirmed. The old man calls the place Moriah.

Moriah is one of those delightfully ambiguous names that can mean several things at once. It probably has to do with seeing at this point, or knowing. Where God sees, he will be seen. Something like that.

A strange vision

And what is it that God sees on a mountain called Moriah? He sees a man. A weak man. A stumbler on the earth. A businessman who got ahead in life. A husband who cheated on his wife. A father who knew the joy of bringing new life into being.

But more than that. God sees a man who was willing to put it all on the line. Who counted his relationship with the God of the VOICE to be the one thing that mattered, the one thing that put everything else together, the one thing that could raise even heaven out of this stench of hell. And in the moment of seeing, God is seen.

For you see, on this same barren spot of ground, centuries later, David would urge Solomon to build the Temple of God, the doorway between earth and eternity. And then, in the mysterious design of the ages, one day another Father would walk these slopes with another Son. And that Son, too, would raise his voice to his Father. And the Father, for a time, would be silent, and the wood of the offering would be prepared. And the Son would be lifted as a sacrifice. And another Father would shed tears of pain as his child, this time, died.

History would repeat itself, and more, with a vengeance. But somehow this Lamb would also be chosen by God for the altar. And Laughter would be silenced for three days while all the world looked on in wonder.

The language of faith

Abraham found his faith that day. But it cost God his Son. And the mystery of life is found now not in a faith that pretends laughter, but in a promise that God knows pain. And because he has walked a mile in Abraham's shoes and ours, he will never leave us. He will never forsake us.

Says the poet: *Often you wondered why tears came into your eyes/and burdens seem to be much more than you can stand./But God is standing near; he sees your falling tears./Tears are a language God understands!/God sees the tears of a broken-hearted soul./He sees your tears, and hears them when they fall./God weeps along with man, and takes him by the hand./Tears are a language God understands!*

Wayne Brouwer is senior pastor at Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich.

Cult makes Japanese wary of religion, says missionary

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRWM) — The Aum Supreme Truth cult's gas attack on Tokyo subways, and its kidnappings, murders and recent confessions of bizarre military plots have produced two negative results within Japan, says a Christian Reformed missionary to Japan .

"The general populace has become wary of all religion, including Christianity," says Rev. Richard Sytsma, Japan field director for Christian Reformed World Missions. "And the government is drafting legislation which would enable it to carry out much stricter surveillance of all religious groups and remove some of the tax-exempt privileges enjoyed by religious bodies since World War II."

Sytsma, who was raised in Japan by missionary parents and has served there for 28 years as a missionary himself, is currently in Michigan speaking to area churches. Sytsma says the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ), the indigenous denomination which works with Christian Reformed World Missions in Japan, is taking action against the pending legislation.

Sytsma explains, "Fearing a curtailment of religious freedom similar to that under the pre-war government, the Reformed Church of Japan and many other groups have officially petitioned the government to reconsider its proposed legislation."

"The RCJ is one of the 10 largest Protestant denominations in Japan, with more than 9,000 members in about 140 churches. A collaboration between the RCJ and Christian Reformed World Missions has resulted in the development of 45 new churches in the past 45 years. CR World Missions has 23 missionaries in Japan.

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Feature

A son returns to Indonesia (1)

No longer at home in his place of birth

Aren Geisterfer

This is the first of a three-part series about Aren Geisterfer's pilgrimage to Indonesia, the land of his birth and imprisonment as a teenager.

I had decided to visit Indonesia, my native country. Via San Francisco I flew to Australia and from there to Jakarta. During the journey I became very tense.

I knew, it would not be easy because the date of my arrival in Jakarta would be the 17th of August. It was the birthday of Indonesia's independence from the Dutch 45 years ago, but it was also the day my mother had died in 1945.

When I boarded the plane in Sidney for Jakarta, I knew that this would be a trip which would evoke many painful memories. Yet I tried to pretend that all was well.

As the plane began its ascent, I finally acknowledged to myself the seriousness of the trip for me. As I loosened my seatbelt, I realized I was sweating profusely. I would be revisiting Java, the island where I was born and where I lived for the first 15 years of my life.

Afraid of 'home'

I was born in the city of Malang. There I played with my siblings and other native children. But my greatest fear was to return to Semarang in central Java. That is where the concentration camps had been, and where the graves of many who were dear to me still lie.

Quietly I looked out of the plane's small oral window, as we flew across my *tanah air kita*, native country. The names of Ceribon, Bandung, Bogor and, finally, Jakarta appeared while others were erased. A voice announced that we were approaching Jakarta. "Batavia," we used to call it.

This was the long awaited moment: stepping off the plane onto Java's soil. I had no feelings of hatred against anyone, but inside I was still hurting.

I wanted to cry, but I couldn't.

As always, in time of trouble, I had been able to suppress my feelings and pretended to be strong, but now everything around me was in movement.

The plane seemed to be landing.

Yes, it was! The late afternoon light was making room for the first signs of the coming night. It was like that first night after I had climbed the *kawat*, the barbed wire camp fence, and ran into the unbelievable experience of being free in an open world.

What could I expect from this side of the *kawat*? In my mind it was 1945. On my way to Lampersari, the camp where my mother had been imprisoned, all kinds of scenes tumbled through my mind. It was all good, exciting news until I was told she was no longer there. She had been buried a week ago.

A vivid memory emerged of how, late that afternoon, I walked back into "my" old camp, Bangkong. It was empty and silent....

Our plane came to a halt.

A voice instructed us to remain seated.

Though that was normal, it triggered more tension in me.

I was back in my homeland, but now as a stranger. Though I was born here, I no longer belonged here. My *tempat*, — dwelling place — was not here, though it was once my home.

Strange that one can come back to "his own" and yet experience that he no longer belongs there.

While I was musing about this, I was mechanically busy unloading the compartments above my seat. I put my luggage on my seat. Nervously my neighbor looked at me and wondered. I tried to look calm, but deep inside I was in turmoil.

The past was returning to me with blurred and jagged flashes of scenes I could hardly decipher.

In vain I attempted to push them back.

I wanted to surpress my undoubtedly ungrounded fears about running into trouble at customs, or later on.

Others who had returned had assured me that I had nothing to fear. "No problem, Aren!" they had guaranteed me; but now I was alone.

Memories of the past kept surfacing while we slowly started to move toward the plane's exit.

I looked around for a place to change some dollars into ruphias.

I quickly discovered a currency exchange. I gave the cashier $200 US and got almost 400,000 ruphias for it. I had never had such a great sum of money in my hands!

After securing my baggage, I went towards customs. There was a large line-up at the customs gate. Quite a few men in military uniforms watched us.

Fear crept into my heart again, but I refused to give into it. I recognized that I become easily suspicious when men in uniform appear on a scene — a reflex from the past.

While I was looking around to make up my mind which line to join, an older customs official beckoned me to come to him.

Quickly I obliged to his call.

When I got to him, he smiled at me. *Selamat datang di Indonesia. Apa kabar?* "Welcome to Indonesia. How are you?" the old chap inquired.

Baik, terima kasih. "Fine, thanks!

When I gave him my passport, he politely accepted it. Quickly he opened it and looked at me, then without hesitation he let me through without asking anything, except wishing me a good trip here in Jakarta.

Trima kasih banyak, I responded, with a heartfelt thanks for the service he had rendered. He smiled back, *Kembali*. "The same to you!

My fears eased and I became more relaxed.

When I got outside it was already totally-dark.

Slowly I started to get used to the darkness and I headed for

A quiet spot in the Indonesian countryside

the exit. I needed a taxi to bring me to the hotel.

My eyes fell on a taxi with an older, seemingly seasoned driver standing close by. I walked up to him and asked how much it would cost to go to the Hotel Marcopolo.

Immediately other drivers lurched forward and started to make offers: 50, then down to 40 dollars.

I felt confident enough to bargain with them, for I heard the different prices. So I asked,

Bolehkah tawar? "May I bargain?

Some of them shook their heads while other nodded in the affirmative. I was back among my people!

And so, I started to bargain in Melayu: *Limabelas, delapan-belas, duapuluh Dolar.* "Fifteen, 18, 20 dollars. At 20 I stopped, hoping one would bite!

Duapuluh dua Dolar, Tuan! "Twenty-two dollars, Sir?"

Mahal terlalu, saya tidak ada uang banyak! I responded "That's too expensive. I don't have much money!"

Upon which they started to laugh loudly.

"OK, *duapuluh Dolar, Tuan!*" the old chap agreed.

I got a taxi for 20 dollars.

The man impressed me.

Quickly I loaded my two pieces of luggage into his car.

Shortly thereafter we left for Jakarta.

I didn't realize that the trip would take the better part of an hour.

We had to go through a couple of military checkpoints and two tolls.

Every time we got to a toll our driver dutifully turned around to me and asked for the toll money, R 3000.

I heard him clearly each time and paid him the money, but I preferred not to hear him.

In due time we arrived safely at the Hotel Marcopolo. Quickly I slipped out of the taxi and inquired inside as to whether the arrangements I had made were in order.

The receptionist confirmed my inquiry while I waited anxiously. She informed me that I had a room on the seventh floor, if I would be so kind as to pay a deposit and sign the registry book. Quickly she slipped a document with the book in front of me and let me sign the documents.

It was not very expensive.

A sigh of relief escaped from my mouth, as I returned the documents to the Javanese woman.

She returned my appreciation and smiled back, wishing me a good stay in Jakarta!

I thanked God for this assurance.

Soon I could lay my tired and rather confused head on a pillow and sleep.

I ran back to the taxi, which was still waiting for me to get my luggage.

I paid the cabbie my promised $20 US, but he insisted that I should give him an additional two Dollars for waiting.

I smiled at him and shook my head, looking at him,

Tidak! "No!"

His beautiful, old face was all smiles. *Tuan, saya miskin!* "Sir, I am poor!"

Tidak bisa, sudara dan saya disetujui duapuluh Dolar. Habis!

"No," I responded, "you and I agreed on the 20 dollars. That is it!"

Coming to his senses, he walked back and wished me well.

A dazzling view

Early the following morning I awoke and went to the open balcony. I was happily surprised by the beautiful sight from the seventh floor.

In front of me a dazzling view unfolded: Jakarta bathing lavishly in the early light of the morning sun. Besides the many skyscrapers there were some big monuments, like the tall Monas, which was over 135 metres high. This national monument in the form of a light marble obelisk is Jakarta's most conspicuous landmark.

There were some others, such as the Patung Pemuda — the youth statue — and the famous Lapangan Banteng — "Brave Fighter" — commemorating the victory over the Dutch in Irian Jaya in 1963. It portrayed an Indonesian soldier clad only in his army pants with his arms raised high above him. Around both his wrists were still handcuffs, with pieces of broken chains. It was a powerful expression of liberation from the Dutch colonial rule.

I could not help but think in terms of the past, how many Indonesians had wrestled their freedom from us, the Dutch.

I was happy for them, though my heart was still sad because of the break between East and West, between Europe and Asia.

In the distant morning haze I discovered the features of the huge new Istiqlal Mosque with its beautiful elongated minaret from which amplified chants were calling Muslim worshippers to prayer.

I watched the heavy traffic below me coming and going; buses, small Japanese trucks and vans, many small cars, three-wheeled "bemos" and countless motorcycles.

Flag no longer elicits hatred

Suddenly I discovered that everywhere the red-white flags were out. There was a time in my life that seeing this flag brought fear and trembling in my heart. I even dreaded it to the extent that I had started to hate it. But now there was none of that in my heart.

Today, the Indonesians were celebrating the 45th anniversary of their independence, which at the same time had meant my going into exile. Never have I found a country that could match the beauty and loveliness of my native Java!

I took a few photographs on this my first morning back on Java.

Later that morning I made my arrangements to fly out to Yogyakarta from where I could travel by car to Semarang.

After I landed safely in Yogyakarta, I took a taxi to my small guesthouse, Peti Mas, in downtown Yogya.

Later that evening I met one of my McMaster University friends, who took me out dining at a Sudanese restaurant, where one eats with his or her fingers.

It was a most enjoyable experience, where the food truly was "finger-licking good"!

Preparation to go on

We discussed my journey to Semarang and made some preparations.

I was given a car from my friend with her driver, Widodjo, to make the trip. He was familiar with the surroundings of Semarang, though he didn't know the cemetery of the *blandas*, the Dutch, and the former concentration camps.

During the night I became anxious again. Fears of the unknown, as well as angst at recognizing the familiar sights, made it impossible for me to get a good night's sleep.

I could not help but think in terms of the past, how many Indonesians had wrestled their freedom from us, the Dutch.

AREN GEISTERFER PHOTOS

Aren Geisterfer eats out, Indonesian style

Aren Geisterfer is the Christian Reformed chaplain at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont.

Feature

Following Christ can be dangerous in Argentina

During July and August 1995 Katrina Reitsma took a leave of absence from her work at the Lighthouse inner-city ministry in Toronto. She participated in an interdenominational seminar called "Partnership in Transforming Mission" in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at the Kairos Centre for Mission and Discipleship. With her in the seminar were 10 other participants from Britain, Germany, Ecuador and the U.S. Each week the group examined different aspects of Latin America, including its history and sociology, economic problems, political issues and church life. Reitsma describes her experiences with the themes of fear, courage and hope.

Katrina Reitsma

The city of Buenos Aires, with a population of 15 million people, is a sophisticated, sprawling metropolis. The city has many well-dressed people, stores stocked high with European fashions, and a wide range of modern technology. On first impression visitors from the "First World" may think the city resembles those in their own countries. However, it's only a superficial resemblance.

PHOTOS COURTESY KATRINA REITSMA

Katrina Reitsma

Buenos Aires is a magnet of seeming pearls and riches to people from the poorer surrounding countries. The city cannot deliver on its apparent promises, however, as there is a 20 per cent unemployment rate and an additional 40 per cent under-employment.

Intersperred within this giant urban area are slums of every description, from decaying, mass-occupied former grand houses in the centre to inadequate dwellings and services at the perimeter.

Oasis amidst wealth and fear

The Kairos Community Centre is a quiet oasis a good hour's bus ride from the city centre. The key person behind Kairos is Rene Padilla, a Baptist pastor and theologian. He was an influential worker with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in his younger days.

In the last 30 years he and his wife, Kathy, have pioneered new church life and initiatives in Argentina. They want to ensure that Christians see clearly that faith in Christ must influence every part of individual, community and national life. Padilla leads a radical ministry but has the trust of community and church leaders across the denominational spectrum in Latin America.

For me personally, being at Kairos meant beginning to see, feel and understand what it can mean to live life in fear, how it's possible to respond with courage, and how there can be hope within this context.

Thousands killed by their own government

Growing up in Canada, I've gone through life so far relatively unconcerned about my own safety or harm being done to those I love. As a visitor in today's Argentina it is possible to ignore the realities of its history, given Buenos Aires' bright lights and dramatic and colorful face. However, the past is never far behind. In particular, the "dirty war" of the '76-'83 military dictatorship, which was responsible for the disappearance of about 30,000 Argentineans, is not so long ago.

With one and a half million other Argentineans exiled or displaced during that time, everyone in Argentina is connected in some way to what happened.

However, only a few, such as the "Mothers of the Plaza" (the mothers of "the disappeared") still publicly remember by calling for justice.

One Thursday, some of our group walked with the Mothers in their weekly protest march. A man with a dark overcoat emerged from a government building and walked through the group of protestors as if they didn't exist, and in a menacing manner.

That was when I first felt a faint "breeze" of fear. I felt that same "whiff" of fear when I walked past buildings in the centre of Buenos Aires, now being renovated. There, the occurrence of torture at the hands of the military is common knowledge.

And again, that same hint of fear: a woman whose relatives had been killed by the military told me that, while freedom exists today, there is a carefulness in speech because that freedom could be gone tomorrow.

Protecting an image of prosperity

I also sensed fear in learning that the government carefully protects an image of a prosperous Argentina. The reality is that the huge middle-class is crumbling and this is actually a period of crisis.

Part of the "protection" of an illusion means that the police harass and "move-on" any visible street people. It means downplaying the large rallies of angry unemployed people and workers who are not being paid their wages. And it means ignoring the fact that Peruvians and other Latin Americans from surrounding nations are flooding the borders on the false promise of available jobs.

At the same time, I experienced in the lives of many Argentineans I met a quality of mind and spirit that enabled them to meet danger or opposition with fearlessness and courage.

We talked with Adolfo Perez-Esquievel, who won the Noble Peace Prize in 1983 for his leadership in pulling together all the non-violence movements in Latin America. This leadership involved deep suffering on his part at the hands of the military, the scars of which he still bears. His hand-shake was firm and strong, his demeanour calm, with a depth of character and conviction based in Christian hope.

I saw courage in a carpenter who had lost his job after 20 years of service with a state company. He was now building small portable homes for the poor who couldn't afford permanent homes, through a business loan from the Kairos community development fund. The carpenter told me he was glad he had lost his job, because he was learning what makes a *home*, not just a house. (He was charging just enough to make a small profit so that the poor could afford the houses.)

Spiritual renewal is spreading

Beyond remembering the courageous responses of many people, I come back to Canada reflecting on the signs of hope and spiritual renewal I saw. The dynamic sector in Christianity is now evangelical, and in particular, Pentecostal. The most dramatic changes from nominal Catholicism or otherwise, to a renewed faith in Jesus Christ are evidenced in Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua and Guatemala. In Brazil up to 20 per cent of the population of 150 million is Protestant. In Guatemala about 30 per cent is now Protestant. This change is remarkable and significant.

At the same time, statistics of church growth only show part of the picture. It was from Rene Padilla, director of the Kairos Centre, that I was encouraged to think again about what the "fullness of mission" means for the church. Padilla's concern is that impressive church growth is small in comparison with the expansion of modern materialism and the worship of the "gods" of the consumer society.

Padilla asserts that "the widest and deepest human need is for a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, through whom the Kingdom is mediated.... But the gospel is good news concerning the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is God's rule over the totality of life. Every human need, therefore, can be used by the Spirit of God as a beachhead for the manifestation of his kingly power. That is why in actual practice the question of whether evangelism or social action should come first is irrelevant. In every concrete situation the needs themselves provide the guidelines for the definition of priorities" ("Mission Between the Times," p. 198).

Coming from a Reformed background, this isn't the first time I've heard about the "Lord's reign over the totality of life." However, it is the first time I've met so many Christians who live this belief in a context where the needs are starkly apparent and where following that conviction can have serious repercussions.

Adolfo Perez-Esquivel, winner of the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize, stands in front of a tapestry he painted depicting Jesus surrounded by Latin American martyrs.

Katrina Reitsma works as the co-ordinator of volunteer services at the Lighthouse in Toronto. The international seminar at the Kairos Centre will be held this year again in July and August in Buenos Aires, and is open to ministers, laypeople and students. For more information, call Katrina at (416) 534-1438.

Opinion

God is countering attacks by Satan

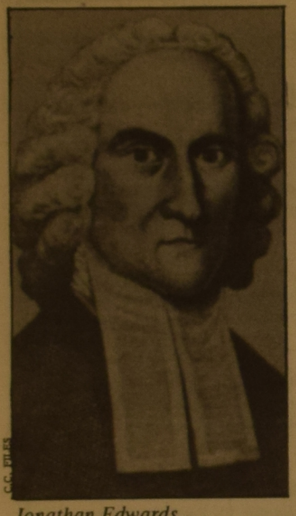
Spiritual revival is part of 'harvest time'

John Plaatjes

Something must be stirring when newspapers start taking notice of the church, which they generally ignore. And the media has certainly taken notice of the "Toronto Blessing."

Ever since reports of "manifestations," healings and other dramatic encounters with the Holy Spirit began about two years ago, Pastor John Arnott's airport congregation has been a drawing-card for Christians from many quarters — from all over Canada, the U.S., England and other countries — all seeking a deepening of their spiritual life, a renewal of their faith.

Pentecostalism has been sweeping through many parts of the world, including South Africa, where it has grown for more than two decades. (The Reformed and Anglican churches there lost thousands of members to Pentecostal churches, the separatists saying that long and uninspired sermons, lack of activities for the young and lacklustre leadership compelled them to leave.)



C.C. FILES

Jonathan Edwards

The cosmic battle heating up

There now seems to be a new spirituality infiltrating North America, even among Canada's Natives. Witness the great gathering of over 2,000 First Nations people in Hull, Quebec, from December 6-9 at which Prime Minister Chretien remarked, "Spirituality is the missing ingredient among the peoples of Canada."

As we near the end of this century and millennium we are experiencing a shameless onslaught on Christianity and the Bible by those who are reviving the old cults and idols (though some of them claim they are part of a "New Age"). In England, there is a return to the ancient worship practices of the Druids. But I'm reminded of this promise of God: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the angel of the Lord shall raise up a standard against him." The present depravity of the world will not last forever. There is a limit to wickedness, as in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Counter-balancing evil

God is counter-balancing the flood of increasing evils with his own activities. Hundreds of churches, in many cultures, are following new missionary visions. Billy Graham Crusades are still filling the stadiums (and television sets) of the world and are adding many new members to the church. Hundreds of new Christian books are being written, including for children; and there are powerful Christian TV and radio programs. Spontaneous revivals have taken place at churches like the Vineyard, and on university campuses in the U.S. and elsewhere. All of this reminds us that God is not dead, but still very much involved in human affairs.

'God was dealing with me'

Some journalists who visited the Toronto Vineyard (now called the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship) were skeptical about the manifestations happening there. They called the behavior they saw irrational or abnormal. Skeptics on Pentecost Day said Christ's disciples were drunk.

Is faith irrational? Falling down in the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit may be unusual for our sophisticated minds, but it is not "abnormal" behavior. In a biblical context, it is perfectly understandable. One man who fell down said, "While down there, God was busy dealing with me — with my sin and style of living, with my unbelief; and I felt an indescribable relief, peace and joy."

There will always be those who find fault with what they cannot understand or explain. The natural mind, not in touch with the mind of God, is completely unable to grasp or appreciate what is happening. For such a person, the Apostle Paul says, the Gospel makes no sense.

C.C. FILES

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, both white and black groups participated in revivals and camp meetings on the American western frontier. This painting is entitled "Prepar' for de Day of Wrath!"

Strange things happened during the 18th and 19th century revivals led by Charles Finney, John Wesley and Dwight Moody, to name a few well-known preachers. Whenever people open their hearts and minds to the Gospel, confess their sin and ask forgiveness, God will not disappoint them.

Even Calvinists can 'revive'

Dr. Louis Praamsma, in *The Church of All Times,* devotes his third chapter to the remarkable revivals of the 18th century. He mentions Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, to whom the doors of the lethargic Church of England were closed, fiery preachers whose challenging messages later brought about the Great Awakening in New England. Their worship services were also characterized by sensational phenomena, especially those of Whitefield.

But what is less known is what happened at Nykerk on the Veluwe in the Netherlands, where most people belonged to the Hervormde Kerk (the state Reformed Church) and were "moderately orthodox, moderately right-thinking, moderately indifferent," in Praamsma's words.

The young pastor Gerard Kuypers, who accepted a call to Nykerk in 1749, called the place another Gerar (the chief city of the Philistines), where there was little evidence of the fear of God.

Kuypers hadn't been there long when on Dec. 16, 1749, a memorable thing happened: "A stream of emotions broke out under the worshipers. Under deep conviction, people burst out weeping, some fell down, unable to stand, trembling and shaking. Others would cry out loudly before falling prostrate on the ground, overcome with deep remorse and overpowering anxiety of soul." And this happened in calm, "right-thinking," sober Calvinistic Holland!

Is the current movement — call it a revival, if you will — a reaction to cold and long sermons, lethargic singing or lacklustre, unimaginative ministers bound by tradition? Or is it a reaction to the (very secular) spirit of our times?

Harvest time is now

Revival times are harvest times; times when God specifically works through his Spirit for the in-gathering of souls before his Son returns in glory. Have we forgotten that Jesus will return?

The December 22 editorial in *Christian Courier* had an urgency about it which no reader should ignore. It was about the end times in which we live. It talked of the "inexorable maturing of time taking place." And it went on: "When you see a pear ripening on a branch, you know that the time of harvest will not be delayed forever. *Humanity is steadily marching to the end times* (emphasis mine). Life as we know it on earth will come to a halt, and Jesus will return in glory. The signs of our time are the signs of ripening."

If only people will read Scripture's warnings! Is there a connection between the strange happenings at the Toronto Airport Fellowship, the times in which we live and the Second Coming of our Lord? I think there is, especially when I consider that miracles of healing and the miracles of changed lives prove that God lives and moves and urges humanity to heed the Gospel.

Through these revivals God is encouraging his church to hold on. He is working his purposes out; it's only a matter of time.

John Plaatjes, a native of South Africa, is a retired pastor who lives in Lynden, Ont.

Agriculture

Outhouse on the path to success

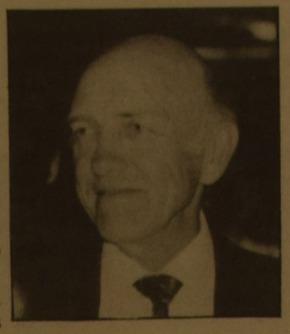
Braving little ladder snakes in summer, cold in winter,
That daily session in the outhouse was a money minter.

No space in the house for a bathroom.
No water pressure system.
No hot water tank.
No bathroom fixtures.
No septic tank and drainage field.
Nothing to buy, replace or repair.
No opportunity cost (this line for the economists).

Savings from the simple life made life possible — rough, but possible.

Agricultural Housekeeping

Vern Gleddie



It recently struck me that an important secret to the success of farm operations in times past was that the toilet was at the end of a path behind the house. Inconvenient, yes; sometimes uncomfortably so. But very cheap to build and operate, thus leaving funds to help keep the family farm going. That alone didn't do it, but it is an illustration of the "make-do" philosophy that kept spending to an absolute minimum and allowed many people to farm.

Survival on the farm today, though, is a much more complex matter than it was 40 years ago. The cost/price squeeze has rendered many farmers helpless to continue. The technological revolution has spawned high-cost farming enterprises. Intensive operations may have tacked on to them the burden of "quota" costs. Yet if young people who wish to farm were imbued with the philosophy of make-do rather than being caught up in modern pursuits of convenience and luxury, we would have more than the present four per cent of the population farming.

'Careful' attitudes disappearing

Surveys show that more energy is used in supplying utilities to the farm house than to the rest of the farm. I was reminded of this again at our Christmas "block" party. We were given a tour of the new house south of our farm where the party was. Everything the young couple wanted was incorporated into the house, including video cameras with infrared lenses to identify thieves, even in the dark (there was a lot to attract thieves). Bathrooms had toilets with built-in exhaust fans, and extra large sinks so as to avoid bumping one's head on the tap while washing one's hair.

On my father's ranch there were eight dwellings both for our family and for full-time employees, but none with indoor plumbing. Admittedly, this alone did not make the place viable, but it was part of a careful attitude which kept spending on conveniences to a minimum. My mother shared the attitude; in fact, she held it even more strongly than did my father. That, along with her strong desire to be a working partner on the ranch, was a big factor in the ranch's success. Most of our food was home grown and prepared by hand. Off-farm jobs were not necessary to provide all the comforts our city cousins enjoyed, and an extra vehicle was not necessary to get anyone to work off the farm. My father had never to borrow a dollar, and his success spanned many decades.

'Blessings' or expropriated benefits?

I was quite amazed to discover when I went away to work in the summer of 1961 that there were farmers who wanted no livestock because they wished to have the winter free to curl or travel south. It seemed to me to be a frivolous attitude. But some farmers felt these were blessings of the Lord. It never occurred to them that possibly what they termed "blessings" were just expropriated benefits which might have been shared with future generations rather than squandered on themselves.

In the pursuit of comfort and convenience, what a toll we take on creation, what financial burdens we inflict on ourselves, what a lot of time we waste in our materialism, and what quality of life we miss. What impoverished lives we then live.

Obviously, we are well beyond the age of the outhouse. But it is still possible to adopt an attitude which keeps expenditures tied to needs and takes a long-term approach — which in turn brings within reach "impossibilities" such as farming.

Vern Gleddie raises sheep on a ranch outside Edmonton. He hasn't used an outhouse in quite a while, but his sheep have.

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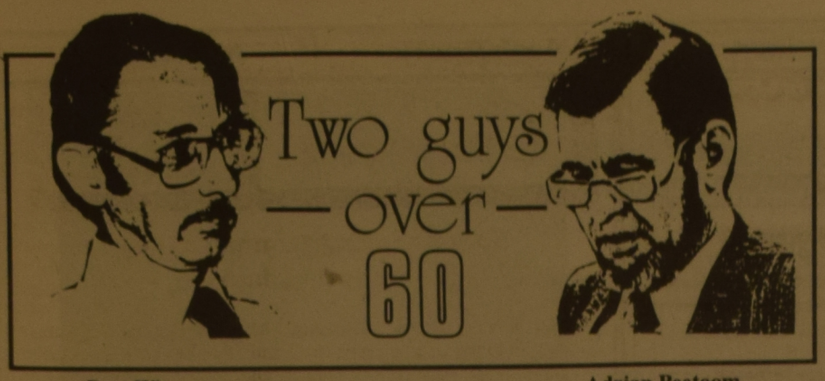

Bert Witvoet **Adrian Peetoom**

Dear Adrian:

Let *me* begin the discussion this time rather than having you start all the time and letting me have the last word.

In our previous column you and I talked about men being unhappy or uncomfortable with church. Just recently I read in Marva J. Dawn's book *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* that at least half of all churchgoers are not all that happy with their church. They're not unhappy enough to leave, but they don't feel good enough to be enthusiastic.

I am not surprised at that statement and wonder if that has not always been the case.

"It's OK to brag about your grandchild."

I'm convinced that over the centuries many, many people have had a love-hate relationship with the church.

I think it partly has to do with the fact that we expect the church to be perfect. After all, we are the Body of Christ, and we're supposed to love each other to death. Do we?

Our love usually starts with ourselves and our family. From there it moves to friends and to acquaintances, and finally, if there's still some love left, to strangers.

Two examples. I'm not a grandfather, but some of my brothers are, and they're forever passing around pictures of their grandchild(ren). You would think that they always had a natural interest in babies. Not so. Before this time they never bothered with them. Their adoration is a clear case of self projection.

A second example: after a church service, worshipers automatically gravitate towards those they like. What's this thing about being the Body of Christ and the family of God?

I'm not complaining when I say this. I'm simply observing what seems to be a natural tendency, although I do think that love should make us more inclusive (It's OK to brag about your grandchild, but for heaven's sake seek out those strangers or non-friends after church). No wonder Paul warns those who cannot be celibate that they will end up having to please their spouses first.

Another expectation we have of the church is that every sermon should transport us from the doldrums of our daily life to some higher plateau of spirituality. But that rarely happens. Mainly because we don't bring our own fuel for the fire. All the minister can do is put the torch of the Word of God to our wood. If we come with hearts that are broken and hungry and lives that have been focused on doing the Lord's will during the week, something will happen, unless the sermon is more like a wet blanket than a fire.

Besides, there is so much more to the service than the sermon. What about the prayers, the readings, the singing and the sacraments?

I think we have to lower our expectations of what people in the church (including the minister) can do and raise our expectations of what God can do by means of fallible people. We should focus on Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, rather than on Joe the Toe. The Lord never disappoints.

I have to admit something that may have to do with the fact that I am "advancing in years" (I suddenly feel a wave of dignity coming over me; or is it an arthritic impulse?). I think I can safely say that my main source of inspiration does not come from church services. I highly value church services and see them as essential for giving corporate expression to the faith. But I see them more as complementing what has been happening throughout the week. I pick up all kinds of revelations during the week while I have devotions, am tested in my service to the Lord, and listen to and observe others.

The other day I was sitting in the bus and watched a young woman talk to a mentally challenged young man. Her voice was so caring and her talk showed such an interest in his life that I was deeply moved. I thanked the Lord for such people. It was a mini sermon, you might say.

The next Sunday worship service was better for me because of it.

Happy New Year!
Bert

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Bert,

You've opened up a number of touchy topics. Both the range of topics and what you say about them clearly point to a major rethinking of what the church is about and to be about. It is also echoed in what a minister recently observed about his denomination's classis: "Six of our 17 churches are in [minister-congregation] crisis situations," (*The Banner*, Dec. 18, 1995, p.10).

Both my own current congregation and the previous one have experienced such conflicts. Fairly frequent notices about a minister's "leave of absence" and "study leave" often hide pain and conflict behind lofty phrases. It's my experience that many pew-sitters and pulpit-climbers no longer feel sure about what church is all about. Perhaps the ones who feel most at ease are the ones for whom church is only a weekly ritual — the ones who enter church with their real thoughts and feelings safely at home or in the trunk.

Let me concentrate on one topic: preaching. I do it fairly often, in my own congregation mostly. I work hard at it — long hours and many revisions. The "redemptive-historical" model which I use most often, requires close attention to the text: what it says, where it is found, its genre and wording. I try to avoid selecting a topic before a text, I curtail "application," and

"I am almost totally at sea about what even the best of any sermons accomplishes these days."

avoid providing "answers." I'm also suspicious of (a) psychologizing a text (bringing in "John Bradshaw" and "Dobson") and (b) manipulating an audience (your "transport from the doldrums").

Some people like my preaching and some don't.

My problem is: I am almost totally at sea about what even the best of any sermons accomplishes these days. Sure, in the short run, pew-sitters will testify that a sermon made an impact on them beyond the parking lot. They may not be able to explain what it was that made the impact, but their words, eyes and body language provide clear witness that their lives (thoughts, feelings, actions) were touched. But sermon impact in the long run?

I must admit, I sometimes hear myself preaching while conscious of total confusion on my part about why I'm doing it. For whom is all this work and care, and how can I ever know whether it matters to anyone in the long run? This sermon and all my sermons together. Together with all the sermons preached every Sunday.

Ah, but I'm not ordained. Maybe "ordained" sermons can claim greater long-term impact. I know some members of my own audiences feel that way, though they don't say it. Well then, if CRC "ordained" preaching is that good (as many claim), then why is the CRC in mortal trouble? Why all the unhappiness? the unrest? the conflicts? Why the likelihood of a major schism in 1996? Why conferences on "Let's split unless Synod repents," and "What to do about classis?" (All from the same issue of *The Banner*.)

You're right about bringing wood to the church which we gather in living spiritually observant lives during the week. But then, why expensive buildings, substantial ministerial salaries and expenses, why bother with classes, synods? Why not share the wood, read some Scripture, pray some, sing some, and wait, like Quakers do, for the Holy Spirit to light the fire?

Isn't the rest a wearying of the soul?

Cordially,
Adrian

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Classifieds

Classified Rates

(Revised February 1, 1995)

Births	$25.00
Marriages & Engagements	$40.00
Anniversaries	$45.00
2-column anniversaries	$90.00
Obituaries	$45.00
Notes of thanks	$35.00
Birthdays	$40.00

All other one-column classified advertisements: $15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is $15.00. Letter under file number $35.00 extra. Photos: $25.00 additional charge.

Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
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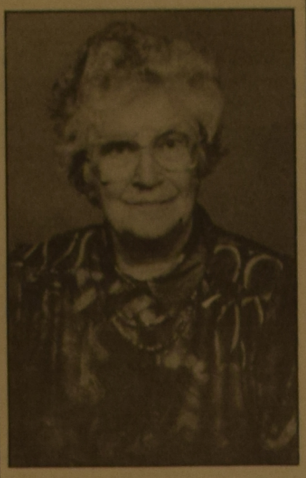
(403) 362-2653

Birthdays

HOFTYZER:



Congratulations to Aleida Hoftyzer (nee Veldhuis) on the occasion of her 90th birthday!

Aalten 90 Brampton
1906 1996

We, the children of
ALEIDA HOFTYZER

thank the Lord for preserving and keeping in His care, our dear Mother, Grandmother and Great-grandmother.

God's grace has been experienced many times in our Mother's life, especially during her two recent surgeries, in the fall of 1995 and January of 1996, along with a serious bout with cancer in 1984.

So it will be with grateful hearts that we will soon be able to celebrate with her, the milestone of her ninetieth birthday.

Love and best wishes from:

Bert & Margaret Hoftyzer — Belleville, Ont.
Ralph & Elly Hoftyzer — Drayton, Ont.
John Hoftyzer — Trenton, Ont.
Dora & Hilbert de Boer — Lindsay, Ont.
Bill & Dorothy Hoftyzer — Foxboro, Ont.
Johanna & Orvis Scott — Gallup, New Mexico
Alida & Albert Dreise — Dundas, Ont.
Gerard & Lilly Hoftyzer — Frankford, Ont.
Albert & Tina Hoftyzer — Frankford, Ont.

and 29 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren.

It is the continued prayer of all of us that, as Mother enters a new phase in her life from independent living to extended care that she will be able to see the Lord's faithfulness each and every day anew.

Address: Mrs. Aleida Hoftyzer, Apt.#311 Covenant Towers, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, ON L6V 3N2.

Calendar of Events on page 19...

Marriages

GUICHELAAR/RUMPH:

Jake and Teresa Rumph of Toronto, Ont., are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of their son
DAVID ALLAN
to
NANCY JEANETTE
daughter of Henry and Nies Guichelaar of Brantford, Ont.

The wedding will take place, D.V., Saturday, Feb. 3, 1996, at 2 p.m., at the Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church, 61 Mohawk Road West, Hamilton, Ont.

Future address: 88 Beston Drive, Hamilton, ON L8T 4W7

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Henk and Neeltje Beldman (nee Pols) on the occasion of their 50th anniversary!

1946 January 30 1996

HENK and NEELTJE BELDMAN
(nee POLS)

Wedding text: "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go, I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Ps.32:8).

God's blessings and congratulations on your 50th anniversary from your children and grandchildren:

Mike & Don
Sarah, Sean
Simon & Mary
Christine, Julie, David, John
Henry & Yvonne
Danielle, Josh, Amy, Robyn

Open house on February 3, 1996, from 2 - 4 p.m., at Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, 716 Classic Drive, London, Ont.

Home address: 197 Minnie Street, Dorchester, ON N0L 1G0

Anniversaries

Congratulations to John and Marie Faber (VanderWerf) on the occasion of their 40th anniversary!

1956 February 3 1996

It is with great joy that we announce the 40th anniversary of our parents

JOHN and MARIE FABER
(VANDERWERF)

We are thankful that God has blessed them with 40 years of marriage. We hope and pray for God's continued guidance in the years to come. Congratulations and love from:

Anita & Glenn Versteeg — St. Thomas, Ont.
Justin, Nicole
Judy — Barrie, Ont.
Joanne & Paul Millson — Strathroy, Ont.
Laura, Steven
Ken — London, Ont.
John & Beverly — London, Ont.

We invite you to share this event with us at an open house on Saturday, Feb. 3, 1996, in the East Chr. Ref. Church Fellowship Hall, from 2-4 p.m.

Best wishes only, please.

Address: 444 Metcalfe St. (E), Strathroy, ON N7G 1R4

Anniversaries

With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we, their children, are happy to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents

OBE and ATSIE MOBACH
(nee OOSTERVEEN)

on Feb. 1, 1996.

Children:

Bernie & Debbie
Donnie
Gerry & Pauline
Lindsay, Matthew, Joshua, David, Alexander, Heather
Hanna
Martin & Jodi
Stephanie, Rebecca, Nicole, Melissa

We invite you to come and celebrate with us, D.V., on Thursday, Feb. 1, 1996, from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m., at their home, 63 Hwy. #8, Dundas, ON L9H 4V1.

Anniversaries

Minnertsga Owen Sound
1951 February 6 1996

It is with joy that we announce the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents

GERRIT and ELISABETH
VANDERPLOEG
(MIEDEMA)

We hope and pray for God's continued blessings and guidance for them in time to come.

Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren:

Stan & Elaine Vander Ploeg
Fernand, Josie, Matthew, Maria, Gerrit
Dave & Phillis Lovell
Nick
Dick & Alma De Vries
Derek, Joseph, Erin, Linsey
Willard & Ingrid VanderPloeg
Bethany, Taylor

Open house will be held at First Chr. Ref. Church in Owen Sound, Ont.

Classifieds

Obituaries

Midlum, Fr. Abbotsford, B.C.
July 24, 1895 - Jan. 1996
Our Mem, Beppe and Great Beppe
HENDRIKJE BEIMERS
(nee ALKEMA)
went to be with the Lord.
Psalm 116.
I shall enter his gates with thanksgiving in my heart. I will enter his courts with praise.
Predeceased by her husband Johannes Beimers, two sons, Clarence and William, and one granddaughter Yfke.
Survived by:
Jan & Aaltje — the Neth.
Tjik — Ont.
Feikje — Ont.
Harry & Ida — Ont.
Ray & Tine — B.C.
Bert & Doreen — B.C.
Gerrit & Anne — Ont.
John & Tine — B.C.
Andy & Johanna — B.C.
38 grandchildren and 68 great-grandchildren.
Memorial and funeral services were held simultaneously in Abbotsford, B.C., and in Pembroke, Ont., Rev. Bert Slofstra and Rev. VanderSluis officiating. Burial in Pembroke, Ont.
Correspondence address: Andy Beimers, 22611 Gilley Rd., Richmond, BC V6V 1E5

On Jan. 6, 1996, following a motor vehicle accident, our beloved husband, father and father-in-law,
ANDY DRIESEN
went to be with our Lord at the age of 55.
He will be greatly missed by his wife Joanne, son and daughter-in-law Jonathan and Riva, daughter Heather, and other special family and friends. Andy received his strength from his Lord and we pray that God will continue to give us strength.
"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

Teachers

RIMBEY, Alta.: The Rimbey Chr. School, located in Central Alberta, is accepting applications for a **high school position** starting September 1996. The Rimbey Chr. School is a dynamic interdenominational school with 120 students. Grade 10 was added in September 1995 and Grade 11 will be added in September 1996 with Grade 12 in 1997.
We are looking for a dynamic Christian individual who will help to develop the high school program. Please send resumes to:
Mr. Henry Vandermeer, Principal
Rimbey Chr. School
Box 90, Rimbey, AB T0C 2J0
Phone: (403) 843-3904 (school)
(403) 782-7962 (home)
Fax: (403) 843-3904

Job Opportunities

Propagation Manager Position

Wholesale nursery in the **Niagara Peninsula** is seeking an individual with strong management skills. Person must have knowledge and good background in all aspects of propagation, seed, divisions, cuttings, grafting, etc. Candidates must have excellent organizational planning, communication and people skills. Excellent compensation and benefits package commensurate with qualifications. Please send in confidence a complete resume with salary history to:

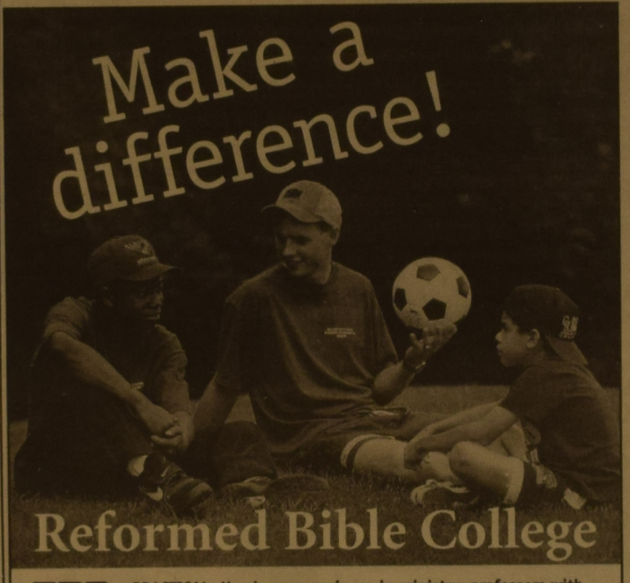
Jane Broere, Willowbrook Nurseries Inc.
1000 Balfour St., Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

Financial Assistance - Classis Niagara

Those persons from congregations in **Classis Niagara** who are planning or are presently studying for full-time ministry in the Christian Reformed Church — as a pastor or evangelist — and who are in need of financial assistance for the 1996-1997 academic year are invited to contact the secretary of the Student Fund Committee: **Mr. Louie VanderBerg, 1662 Second Ave., R.R. #3, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9, Fax: (905) 641-4624.** Application form deadline is **March 22, 1996.**

YOUTH WORKER NEEDED

Hebron Chr. Ref. Church, Whitby, Ont., is developing an exciting Youth Ministry based on the "Nurture Model." We are looking for a part-time **Youth Worker.** For a job description **call (905) 668-5141** or write **Hebron CRC, 407 Crawforth St., Whitby, ON L1N 3R6.**



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3333 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Job Opportunities

PRINCIPAL

The **Edmonton Society for Christian Education** is searching to fill the vacancy of **High School Principal**, commencing **August 1, 1996.**

Our 170-student, grades 10-12 High School has been a reformational presence in Edmonton for more than 25 years.

Applicants who have the experience, vision and skills to lead our staff and students and to work within an administrative team led by a superintendent, are encouraged to apply before **February 16, 1996**. We expect applicants to be eligible for an Alberta Teaching Certificate. The salary will be commensurate with training and experience.

Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of education to:

Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
13470 Fort Road, Edmonton, AB T5A 1C5

PRINCIPAL

Lacombe Chr. School, Lacombe, Alta., is accepting applications for the position of **Principal** for the **1996/97** school year.
Lacombe Chr. School is a school of 340 students serving grades K-9. The school is located in the town of Lacombe, located midway between Edmonton and Calgary.
The Lacombe Chr. School is looking for an educational leader who is a committed Christian and who has the experience, vision and skills necessary to lead our staff and school.
Please send resume, statement of education philosophy and other pertinent information prior to **January 31, 1996**, to:

Mr. John Piers, Principal
Lacombe Chr. School, 5206-58 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 1G9
Phone: (403) 782-6531; Fax: (403) 782-5760

Miscellaneous

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For more information or forms, contact Mr. John Rhebergen.

THE KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
9125 - 50 St., Edmonton, AB T6B 2H3
(403) 465-3500 FAX (403) 465-3534
E-mail: jrheberg@kingsU.ab.ca

Classifieds

Teachers

BOWMANVILLE, Ont.: Knox Chr. School invites applications for a **possible Grade 6** teaching position commencing May 1, 1996. Interested qualified applicants should submit letter of application, references, and resume as soon as possible to:

Bill Helmus, Principal
Knox Chr. School
410 Scugog St., R.R.1
Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K2
School: (905) 623-5871
Home: (905) 623-6952
Fax: (905) 623-8877

MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.: Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is an interdenominational school, currently presenting Christian education from Kindergarten to Grade 8. With a preference towards experienced teachers, we are now accepting applications for definite teaching positions in the intermediate and Middle School grades. Please send resumes to:

Rod Berg, Principal
Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School
12140 203rd Street
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4V5
Phone: (604) 465-4442
or Fax: (604) 465-1685

NORTH YORK, Ont.: Willowdale Chr. School invites applications for a part-time Tuesdays and Thursdays **Junior Kindergarten teaching position** from March 26 to June 20, 1996, to fill a maternity leave. Please send your resume to:

Mrs. C. Bootsma, Principal
Willowdale Chr. School
60 Hilda Ave.
North York, ON M2M 1V5
Inquiries?
Call (416) 222-1711

Personal

Retired widower, independent, Protestant, good health, early 70s, likes to develop a friendship with Chr. lady, approx. same age, with the sincere hope of a lasting permanent relationship in the future. Location mid-western Ontario. Please send letters to **File #2640, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1**

Retired widower, in good health, likes to meet Christian lady (SW or central Ontario). Age 57-64. Reply with note and phone number to **File #2638, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1**

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Job Opportunities

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Position responsibilities: To give dynamic leadership to a growing charity, involved in Bible distribution work worldwide.

Skills demanded: Preferably the successful applicant should be university trained with a degree in humanities, displaying well developed administration and management skills. The person must possess excellent oral and written communication abilities and be a people challenger in fund raising.

Residence: The person appointed is asked to re-locate to Burlington, Ontario, or immediate area.

For more information and/or a detailed position description, please call or send resume to:

"Search Committee," The Bible League
P.O. Box 5037
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
Tel.: (905) 319-9500 Fax: (905) 319-0484

This position remains open until an appointment is made.

Superintendent

The Edmonton Society for Christian Education is taking a bold step into the future.

We are seeking a visionary and dedicated **Superintendent** to provide direction, development and management for our society and our 900 K-12 students and staff in three schools. The successful applicant will help us to translate our reformational education vision into an increasingly effective Christ-centred school system for students, teachers, principals and supporting community, commencing **August 1996.**

We expect applicants to be eligible for an Alberta Teaching Certificate. The salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience.

Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of Christian Education before **Feb. 16, 1996,** to:

Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
13470 Fort Road
Edmonton, AB T5A 1C5

Please take advantage of our **monthly Business Directory.** For a low cost of **$25** (add 7% GST) you can advertise your business.

Job Opportunities

PRINCIPAL/TEACHER

Hudson's Hope, B.C.: Hudson's Hope Maranatha Christian Academy. A non-denominational school, offering Kindergarten through Grade 8, teaching the B.C. core curriculum and receiving group 1 funding (presently 2.7 teachers and 33 students), is accepting applications for **Principal/Teacher.** Experience in teaching multi grades and French would be beneficial. Please address all inquiries to chairperson:

Katherine Tichonow
H.H.M.C.A., Box 239, Hudson's Hope, BC V0C 1V0
Fax: (604) 783-9498 Res. Phone: (604) 783-5295

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777 Hwy. 53 E., Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4, (905) 648-2131

Classifieds/Events

Employment Wanted

PORT DOVER, Ont.: Ambitious, 18-year-old female looking for work with plants and/or animals anywhere in Canada before going to college. I can start any time after February 14 till the end of August. I have worked and lived on a dairy farm all my life and spent the last summer working at a Horticultural Research Station. **(519) 428-1630, ask for Sara or leave a message.**

Enthusiastic, Dutch Chr., with a Can. Chr. wife and two young children, will be immigrating to Ontario in May, and we **are looking for work.** I have much **logistics/warehouse** exp. and my wife is an **elem. Chr. Sch. teacher.** We are willing to settle anywhere the Lord leads. Please contact: Robert and Annette Schreuders, Kruiszwin 3712, 1788 PN Den Helder, the Neth. Phone: 011-31-223-644203, or our Can. contact, **G. Oosterhof, Tel./Fax 1-613-541-0101.**

Vacations

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Share your family news with the rest of us. Place an ad in C.C.

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

The
Serving Christ in the Nineties
conference is a

spiritual retreat for the Reformed community in Southern Ontario. The conference, which takes place **Feb. 9-10, 1996,** will be held at the scenic **Canterbury Hills** in **Ancaster**, Ont. Registration time is 7 p.m. For more information, or brochure material, call: **Marcia DeHaan (905) 648-4689, Connie Kuipers (416) 534-9575, or Will Lammers (905) 945-6380.**

We hope to see you there!

Can you help?

Catherina Vanderschaaf-Kuiken from Damwoude, (Fr.), the Neth., is trying to find out who might have a painting done by her late father, **Klaas Kuiken**. If you have one, please write to:

Hillside Acres
2907 Cons. Rd. 8, Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K6
or call (905) 263-2985

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Events

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REFORMED MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

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- A weekend to focus on the one you love the most;
- Highly recommended by Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family;
- Over 4,000 couples have attended a Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend.
- For more information or to register for the next weekend call:

marriage encounter

Bill & Robina Dieterman
(registration couple)
(403) 963-3663

"Love one another as I have loved you"
(John 15:12)

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Jan. 28 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Riemer Praamsma, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Feb. 7 The 1996 annual "Church and the Law" seminar, 8:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m., Queensway Cathedral, 1536 The Queensway, **Etobicoke** (Toronto), Ont. For registrations call (519) 669-5137 or fax (519) 669-3291.

Feb. 9-10 The 1996 "Serving Christ in the Nineties" conference, Canterbury Hills, **Ancaster**, Ont. Panelists: Aren Geisterfer, Ron Kuipers, Mary Vandervennen, Sylvia Keesmaat, Lorraine Land, Roseanne Sweetman and Jack Couperus. Keynote speaker: Don Postema on "Leaving space for God." Registration starts at 7 p.m. Info.: Marcia De Haan (905) 648-4689, Connie Kuipers (416) 534-9575, or Will Lammers (905) 945-6380. (#)

Feb. 25 The Mississauga Choral Society presents "A Song of David," a programme based on Psalm texts, with Bach's motet "Lobet den Herrn," Handel's "Dixit Dominus," and Derek Holman's "A Song to David." At 3 p.m., St. Dominic's Church (Cawthra & Atwater), **Mississauga**, Ont. Info.: (905) 278-7059.

March 1-3 "Reformed Engaged Encounter" weekend, Notre Dame Centre, **Waterdown**, Ont. Info./registration: (905) 957-4505. (#)

March 8-9 The 1996 annual meeting of the Renewal Fellowship within the Presb. Church in Canada. Theme: "New Realities, New and Renewed Responses." Keynote speaker: John G. Stackhouse. At Bridlewood Presb. Church, **Scarborough**, Ont. Info.:/registration: (416) 233-6581 or (519) 651-2232.

March 29-31 "Reformed Marriage Encounter" weekend, **Peterborough**, Ont. Info./registration (905) 386-6523. (#)

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News

Volunteer helps reunite Rwandan children with parents

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRWRC) — When Christian Reformed World Relief Committee volunteer Patsy Orkar left for Rwanda in 1994, she expected to be stationed for five months at a Baptist orphanage in Goma, Zaire.

Instead, Orkar landed in the northern Rwandan town of Kibuye, near Lake Kivu, which is shared with neighboring Zaire. Orkar explains, "I was the first of the Canadian team to arrive in Nairobi, Kenya. I learned that UNICEF had been able to take over and run the program in Goma. But they needed someone in Kibuye and I was willing to go."

COURTESY KITCHENER-WATERLOO RECORD

Patsy Orkar

So instead of working in Goma, Orkar initially joined a Rwandan team to carry out a joint food security project involving CRWRC, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and USAID. Food, seeds and tools were provided to help families re-establish their farms.

With assistance from local leaders, Orkar's team (on which she was one of only two non-Rwandans) identified the poorest families and individuals, ensuring that the aid would be given to those most in need, regardless of ethnic group.

Preparing for local management

By early 1995, the Kibuye food and agriculture program had completed its first phase. Stage two would involve preparing local people to manage the project without outside assistance. "In a lot of these aid programs, there was just no infrastructure left," Orkar explained, "so in many ways you're helping to build that back up again while training people for specific projects."

Although the project in Kibuye no longer needed her, Orkar stayed on in Rwanda. She moved on to the central Rwandan prefecture of Giterama where she spent nearly seven months in the rural village of Musambira, working with children who had been separated from their parents or orphaned during the war. Later, she worked in a similar program for three months in Uvira, Zaire.

Organized by Food for the Hungry Intl., this CRWRC-supported project called Child-WINS! was set up to place children with willing foster families. Since the foster families are often poor, support was available to enable them take on the responsibility of feeding and clothing another child.

"A family context is always preferable to raising children in an orphanage, where children don't receive as much individual attention," Orkar said. "People really love their children here; they believe that children are the future of the country...."

Orkar is also convinced that the foster family program can help reunite extended communities torn apart by the recent war. It's no accident that she and a dozen fellow workers (mostly Rwandan women) avoided asking questions that dealt with the ethnic background of affected children or their host families.

Tracing those thought dead

Working in communities throughout Rwanda and in refugee camps in Zaire, the Child-WINS! program alone is helping an estimated 10,000 Rwandan children, Orkar said.

Helping reunite displaced children with parents once thought dead made the biggest impression on Orkar. "It's surprising how many could be traced," Orkar said, relating how her team travelled throughout the region trying to locate parents or relatives based on information provided by the children. Children as young as two or three years old sometimes remembered where they played, what the market was like, or other recognizable landmarks.

As another part of the program, Orkar and her team used games and role-play groups to teach children how to express the nightmare they had lived through. But it took time to convince local leaders of the value of these kinds of activities. Orkar explains, "In Rwandan culture, this isn't done. If something bad happens to you, you're just supposed to keep quiet, forget and get on with your life. We had to persuade people that nothing this bad had ever happened before and that it's a lot worse for children if they never get through their fear."

COURTESY CRWRC

Orkar helped co-ordinate emergency food distribution in the aftermath of Rwanda's violent ethnic clash.

Telling God you're angry

While the majority of Rwandans were brought up Roman Catholic due to the influence of 19th century French missionaries, Orkar observed that many older children "were angry with God. They had a lot of conflict about their faith.... We tried to encourage them to talk to God again because they needed that comfort; they needed to know there is a loving God who hasn't forgotten them."

Orkar herself knew that comfort during her 15-month stay in Rwanda, a tour of duty that forced her back to the basics, she says, of "who God is and how he relates to his people."

Orkar asks for continued prayers for Rwanda. Although many people have now returned to their homes and the cities are once again bustling, the underlying hatred between ethnic groups remains and may explode in violence once again.

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News Digest

French don't fancy Paris

PARIS — People around the world may dream of "gay Par-ee," but the French do not. A survey released last week shows that only three per cent of the French say they would want to live in Paris, reports the Associated Press. Nice, Montpellier, Toulouse and Bordeaux were all well above the renowned French capital on the list of cities to which French citizens would want to relocate. "Even cold Grenoble at the foot of the Alps and grim Nantes on the Atlantic coast beat out the City of Light," says AP.

Paris was not at the bottom of the list, however. Three cities tied for that distinction: Le Havre, in Normandy; Valenciennes, near the Belgian border; and Saint-Etienne, near Lyon.

Forty-six per cent of those surveyed said they would prefer to live in a small town; 29 per cent would prefer a "village," and only 24 per cent a large city. The survey was taken for *Le Pelerin* magazine in early December.

Retailers sell smokes to minors

OTTAWA (Health Canada) — When research teams of one adult and one minor visited 5,000 tobacco retailers in 25 cities last summer, they discovered that an average of 52 per cent of those retailers were willing to sell cigarettes to youths under the age of 18. That is contrary to provisions of federal and provincial tobacco sales-to-minors legislation.

Compliance varied greatly across the country. It was over 90 per cent in six cities, including Medicine Hat and Campbell River, B.C. But in nine other cities (four of the nine in Quebec) it was even below the national average of 52 per cent.

Also, 65 per cent of retailers will sell to under-age girls, while "only" 43 per cent would sell to under-age boys. And not surprisingly, a large number of teenaged clerks (63 per cent) are willing to sell cigarettes to their under-age peers.